

We Are Not an Endangered Species!

Sadhguru and Dr. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw discuss environmental degradation, population growth, consumerism, and consciousness.

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Sadhguru and Dr. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, one of India's most successful self-made women and the founder-chair of the country's leading biotechnology enterprise, Biocon, met on 22 April 2017 in Bengaluru for an interactive conversation about some of the most pressing issues for humanity today. In this excerpt, they discuss matters of environmental degradation, population growth, consumerism, and consciousness.

Where's Our Civic Sense?

Dr. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw: Since everyone here is from Bangalore, I want to come to something that really just plagues us every day, and that is we're seeing debris all over the place, we're seeing

polluted lakes – we’ve got a lot of problems in this city. And everything has to do with us. We can’t keep asking the government to do everything – after all, it’s Swachh Bharat [Clean India Movement].

We have all sort of accepted the fact that by 2020, India must become a clean country. And yet, three years later, if you look at what we are actually doing, we are not changing our habits. We still keep chucking litter all over the place; we pollute lakes. No one seems to have any civic sense in this country.

So, how do we get a sense of civic-mindedness in our country? Many of us try to do it, but we finally give up. How do we deal with all these issues?

Sadhguru: Recently, a certain photograph has been going around on WhatsApp, that on Hanuman Jayanti, somewhere on the Mumbai-Pune road, someone had served a proper meal for over a hundred monkeys. They’re all sitting in one row and eating from their banana leaves. So someone asked me, “Sadhguru, how is this possible? Have they photoshopped this?” I said, “No Photoshop. This is all it takes. If you make sure everybody is well provided for, they will get civilized.” Right now, everything is scarce. When everything is scarce, people are elbowing each other and doing some nonsense. A little more space is needed for human beings. We are nice, but we are just too many.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the [human population](#) on this planet was only 1.6 billion. Today we’re 7.5 billion. In India, in 1947, we were only 33 crores. Today, we are 134 crores. In seventy years, a fourfold increase in the reproduction is irresponsible. But this has not happened just because of excessive reproduction. This is happening because of a great increase in life expectancy. In 1947, the average life expectancy of an Indian was twenty-eight years. Twenty-eight – you heard me.

Dr. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw: Now it’s sixty-eight.

Sadhguru: Which is a wonderful thing to have happened. We have postponed our death. Simple arithmetic: if we postpone death, should we not also postpone birth? There was a time when most young women in this country were getting pregnant by the time they were fifteen or sixteen. Today, it’s been pushed to around twenty, on an average. We have to push it to thirty-five. Since you raised the gender issue – if a woman does not deliver a child till she is thirty-five, one thing is, most of the time, she will get well educated, she will get professionally established, and maybe she will get wise and not have a child at all.

There’s nothing bad about having a child – we all were born that way. It’s just that we are not an endangered species.

There’s nothing bad about having a child – we all were born that way. It’s just that we are not an endangered species. If you were a tiger, I would say let us have fertility clinics. But we are human, and we are reproducing too well. When I see the fertility clinics, my heart sinks, because this stems from a fanaticism that only what comes out of your body can be yours. Why can’t others be yours as well? This is what being human means; if you are willing, you can live here without any sense of boundary. Boundaries are not fixed upon you by nature. You are unconsciously, compulsively setting boundaries for yourself. That means you have not explored the dimension of being human. You are still trying to operate like any other creature on the planet.

If you explore the dimension of what it means to be human, you will see inclusion does not mean biology – inclusion means consciousness. If [consciousness](#) rises, you will make different choices. We have hundreds of couples who are full-time or part-time Isha volunteers. None of them have children. They have deliberately chosen not to have children of their own, because I’m giving them thousands of children – millions if they are ready. Where is the need to biologically identify with a child? I’m thinking of something very audacious for which I’ll become super unpopular. I’m thinking of instituting an award for all those young women who are healthy, who are capable of having a child, but choose not to have one.

Dr. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw: Well, you’ve got a good endorsement for that.

Sadhguru: Because, whether you realize this today or not... You think the problem is parking, garbage, or healthcare – no. The problem is population.

Is there a Cure for Consumerism?

Question from the audience: Namaskaram, Sadhguru. Hindustan has always been self-reliant. But today, everyone has become a consumer. Consumerism is increasing day by day, and along with that, the piles of garbage, the pollution of rivers. Can you advise us on how, in this age, we can become self-reliant again?

Sadhguru: You will never ever succeed in controlling human aspiration, but you can control human population. Right now, the United Nations and others are making a prediction that by 2050, we will be 9.7 billion people on the planet. I want you to imagine your life in Bangalore City. We will have to live with forty percent less resources than we have right now. When I say resources, I'm not talking about oil, gold, diamonds, and things like that. I'm talking about food, water, air. In a minute, you are probably taking something like twelve to fifteen breaths. Try to make do with ten breaths and see how it feels.

That's how you will be feeling in 2050, unless we consciously control the [population's growth](#). If we fail to do that, nature will do it to us in a cruel manner, and maybe fix it. But is it not an insult to our humanity and our intelligence if we do not take corrective action, if we allow nature to do a cruel correction rather than we doing a conscious correction?

Above all, in order to fix this, one thing that's very important is – though people think these two things are not linked – if you become meditative by your own nature, if you sit here, if you feel complete by yourself; outside you will do only what is needed – nothing more, nothing less. Right now, you are in a compulsive state. In this state, you cannot stop the consumerism.

I want all of you to go and check at home. How many things in your house have you not used in the last one year?

Do not try to control human aspiration, otherwise people will become devious. If we control human population and make human beings joyful by their own nature, then they will do what they really want to do. They will not do it because it is compulsive. Right now, if they want to be happy, they have to do so many things.

You have to bring the human being to an [inner state of wellbeing](#) where, if he or she sits here, life is complete. Right now, all of us are sitting here in the same hall, breathing the same air, probably we eat the same kind of food. But how I am within myself in this moment, I will not exchange this with anything in the universe. If you offer me the entire world, I will say “no deal.” If you were like this, would we have to talk to you about consumerism? You would do what is needed. You would never do what is not needed.

I want all of you to go and check at home. How many things in your house have you not used in the last one year? Most probably, you will never use most of it again, but it will be there. Someone will have the trouble of disposing this off after you're dead. Please give it away. All those things that you have not used for one year, just give them away.

Editor's Note: *Sadhguru explores the science behind Bharat, India's original name, and looks at how the culture in this nation was carefully crafted for ultimate wellbeing in the ebook, “[Bha-ra-ta: The Rhythm of a Nation](#)”. Pay what you wish. For a free download, in India, click “[Claim for Free](#)”. Elsewhere, enter “0” in the price field.*

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